

such as community colleges, technical institutes, skill centers, and other public and private colleges, also offer vocational and technical education.

Reforms made to the Perkins Act in 1998 increased the focus on ensuring that participating students at both the secondary and postsecondary levels acquired academic and technical skills, as well as completed their respective programs and transitioned into successful employment or further education. Some progress has been made as states have created an initial performance accountability system and the focus on academic performance among students participating in vocational and technical education courses has been strengthened.

Today, I am offering the Vocational and Technical Education for the Future Act to build on the 1998 reforms, and ensure vocational and technical education continues to prepare students for whatever they choose to pursue upon graduation. Should a student choose to proceed with postsecondary education, enter the military, or pursue other opportunities, the goal of the Perkins program must be to prepare students with the right combination of academic and technical skills so that they may succeed in whatever path they choose.

The bill I am offering includes a number of reforms designed to enhance achievement and accountability, streamline programs so that states may better utilize federal dollars, and provide model sequence of courses that will enhance vocational and technical education programs and partnerships.

The bill includes important steps to increase accountability, and emphasize continued improvement in student achievement. The bill establishes separate performance indicators for secondary and postsecondary students, improving on current law by recognizing the need for distinct measures to be applied to differing students. The bill also requires states to make continued and substantial improvement in the academic and vocational and technical achievement of students, and establishes incentive grants for states exceeding their own high standards.

To increase accountability and achievement at the local level, the bill requires local programs to establish local adjusted levels of performance similar to current statewide performance level expectations. The Vocational and Technical Education for the Future Act also establishes local improvement plans and permits states to apply sanctions for local recipients that, after receiving technical assistance, fail to show improvement or continually do not meet local adjusted levels of performance.

To better streamline and target federal funding, the bill combines funding for the Tech-Prep and Perkins state grant programs into one program funding stream, and incorporates the activities of Tech-Prep into the basic grant program. This consolidation will increase flexibility for states, streamline funding, and ensure current activities continue to exist while the program as a whole is updated to meet the challenges of the future.

The Vocational and Technical Education for the Future Act includes an important new element that will build upon efforts to coordinate secondary and postsecondary vocational and technical education. The bill requires states to develop model sequences of courses for vocational and technical programs to be used as an option at the local level. These model se-

quences of courses will incorporate both secondary and postsecondary elements, include rigorous and challenging academic and vocational and technical content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses, and lead to a degree or credential.

Technology and economic competition are combining in ways that are changing the nature of work and are redefining the American workplace. The need for higher literacy, numeracy, communication, and interpersonal skills in the workplace has grown over the past decade and will continue to be an important factor in the workplace in the future. The skills needed to be successful in postsecondary education are similar to the skills that are required by employers. The need for a strong academic and technical background makes it imperative that the current vocational and technical education system adapt in order to provide the knowledge and skills needed to succeed.

The bill I am offering today seeks to meet the challenges of a changing economy and workplace by building upon the current successes of vocational and technical education. Our challenge is to ensure that all vocational and technical education students have access to programs that are sufficiently rigorous in both their academic and technical content, as well as provide clear connections with the education and training beyond high school that most Americans need for continued workplace success. I believe this bill fulfills those high standards, and I am pleased to be offering it today.

THE ARRIVAL OF WILLIAM ETHERIDGE OTTO

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a joyful heart to announce the birth of my very first grandchild. On January 19, my wife Faye and I welcomed into this world William Etheridge Otto, the new son of our daughter Catherine Etheridge Otto and her husband Tim. William arrived at 9:03 a.m. in Raleigh, North Carolina. He weighs seven pounds and seven ounces and measures 21 inches.

Faye and I are proud as can be of our very first grandchild and his parents. Looking into the face of a newborn baby reaffirms your hope for mankind, your faith in God and your commitment to family. I want my grandson to grow up in a peaceful and prosperous nation, where he can achieve his dreams and is limited only by his willingness to work hard. I want William Etheridge Otto and all children to have good schools, safe neighborhoods and the best medical care. And I hope our national leadership can return to the values of balanced budgets and opportunity for all so that my grandson's generation can reach for the American Dream. Those are North Carolina values. I look forward to teaching William those values throughout his precious life.

A new child in the family is a gift from God. The Etheridge family today is very blessed to welcome our newest addition. I look forward to introducing him to my friends and neighbors.

LEGALIZATION OF ILLICIT DRUGS

HON. MARK E. SOUDER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to call attention to the work of organizations that seek the legalization of illicit drugs in our country, to the detriment of the health and safety of our citizens.

On January 4, 2005, the Washington Post published an article entitled "Exhale, Stage Left," chronicling the career of Keith Stroup, the founder and retiring executive director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML). This article sheds light on some of the operations and claims of such organizations, and I ask that it be entered into the RECORD.

Particularly disturbing in this story is the entanglement of the drug legalization group with those who stand to profit from others' addiction—drug traffickers. The Washington Post article describes that one of the major early financial backers of NORML was "the legendary pot smuggler" Tom Forcade. To collect donations, Stroup even went to Forcade's "stash house," which was "filled with bales of marijuana." Certainly we can understand why a drug smuggler would contribute generously to efforts to legalize drugs like marijuana—with so much product to move, this man had a vested financial interest in making harmful drugs easier for people to obtain. But what kind of group takes money from such a criminal? Do we really want our laws "reformed" by efforts funded by criminal enterprises? Yet according to the article, it had seemed "perfectly normal for NORML to call a dope smuggler when it ran short of cash."

Drug legalization groups like to claim that marijuana is not really harmful and that it does not serve as a "gateway" to the use of other dangerous drugs. In fact, on its website, NORML claims, "There is no conclusive evidence that the effects of marijuana are causally linked to the subsequent use of other illicit drugs." Perhaps NORML needs to look back at the experiences of its own leaders to re-examine such an assertion. The Post article describes how Stroup and his colleagues themselves moved onto other drugs in the 1970s: "Privately, he and his NORML pals joked about forming an advocacy group for another drug they'd begun to enjoy—cocaine." I'm sure that the families who have suffered through the heartaches of cocaine addiction could inform NORML that cocaine abuse is no laughing matter. Stroup has come to realize that as well, admitting that his own use of cocaine may have led to lapses in professional judgment and that he knows now that "[c]ocaine is deadly." Once, though, he had thought cocaine harmless. If he was wrong about cocaine, might he not likewise be wrong in presuming marijuana harmless?

In an attempt to make marijuana sound "harmless," drug legalization groups also try to downplay the addictive qualities of marijuana. NORML states on its website, "While the scientific community has yet to achieve full consensus on this matter, the majority of epidemiological and animal data demonstrate that the reinforcing properties of marijuana in humans is low in comparison to other drugs of abuse . . ." Yet the leaders of legalization